

Vol. 64, September 2025 www.squarepetals.com

SquarePetals

Global Webzine



*Navratri
Special*

Personal Development

Geopolitics

Defence

Society

Nutrition

Poems

Flavor Special

Top Trend



From The Desk of Editor-in-Chief

Dear readers,

Welcome to the latest issue of our magazine! As we curate the stories for this edition, a powerful, unifying theme began to emerge: the journey. Whether it is a journey of faith, a trek through memory, a shifting of global power, or the simple, timeless path from grain to bread, our lives are defined by these transformative voyages.

This month, we immerse ourselves in the vibrant spirit of Navratri, a nine-night festival of divine energy, dance, and devotion. It's a celebration that marks a cultural and spiritual journey, reminding us of the triumphant power of good and the cyclical nature of time. This same theme of inner strength and perseverance is explored in our wellness section with articles on "Moving Mountains" and why we must "Coax the Spirit, Don't Conquer It," offering profound insights into harnessing our internal fortitude gently yet effectively.

From the spiritual to the deeply personal, we are honoured to feature a poignant account in "REMINISCING MY JOURNEY AS A MILITARY VETERAN." It is a powerful narrative of discipline, sacrifice, and reflection—a testament to a life lived in service to the nation.

Expanding our lens to the global stage, we dissect the complex geopolitical landscape in our analysis of "The Russia-India-China troika." This piece navigates the intricate dance of diplomacy and strategy that is shaping our contemporary world.

In moments of quiet reflection, we turn to the arts. Our poetry corner offers two evocative pieces, "When she sleeps" and "Autocorrect," each capturing fleeting moments of modern life with grace and wit.

Finally, we invite you to a journey for the senses. We trace the humble yet profound history of a household staple in "Journey of timeless staple Chapati" and indulge your taste buds with the delectable story behind the iconic "Halwa Nagori Platter."

This issue is a mosaic of experiences—from the divine and the diplomatic to the deeply personal and the deliciously simple. We hope these stories resonate with you, spark your curiosity, and enrich your perspective.

Happy reading!

Happy Reading & Happy Navratri

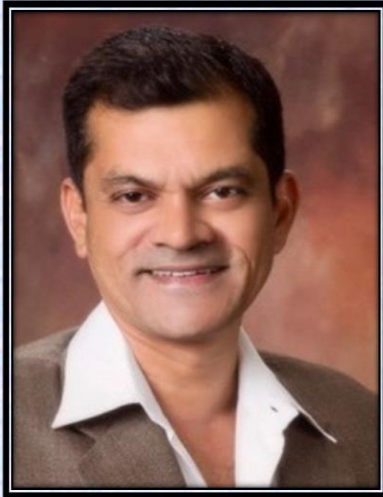
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Reach us @

www.esquirevj.biz
www.squarepetals.com
squarepetalsmedia@gmail.com

(M) +91 77788 96891 / 137

Article Writers:

Col. Ajay Singh
Col. Vineet Dev
Col. Madhur Goyal
Dr. Sansriti Johri
Mr. Michael Ediale
Mr. Badrish Srivastava
Dr. Neeru Bhatt
Ms. Falguni Thakkar



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Knotty Love Story ...
when it's nomads, it's intense!

The Essence of Navratri

A Symphony of Celebration:



Navratri, meaning "nine nights," is one of the most vibrant and revered festivals celebrated across India. While its observance and rituals vary from region to region, its core essence remains the same: the triumph of good over evil, the celebration of the divine feminine energy, and a profound journey of spiritual renewal. This festival is a dazzling spectacle of color, music, and dance, with its heart beating to the rhythm of devotion and community.

The Mythological Roots: A Battle for Righteousness

At the heart of Navratri's significance lies the epic mythological tale of Goddess Durga and the demon Mahishasura. According to legend, Mahishasura, through his immense penance, had earned a boon of immortality from Lord Brahma, with the condition that he could only be defeated by a woman. Drunk

on power, he unleashed a reign of terror on Earth, and even the gods were unable to stop him.

To put an end to his tyranny, the Trimurti—Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva—combined their divine energies to create Goddess Durga. Embodying the collective power of all gods, she was armed with their potent weapons and mounted on a lion. The battle between Durga and Mahishasura raged for nine days and nine nights. On the tenth day, she finally beheaded the demon, marking the ultimate victory of righteousness (Dharma) over evil (Adharma). These nine nights of battle are what we celebrate as Navratri, and the tenth day, Vijayadashami (Dussehra), marks the culmination of this victory.

Honouring the Nine Forms of the Divine

Each of the nine nights of Navratri is dedicated to worshipping a different manifestation of Goddess Durga, known collectively as the Navadurga. These nine forms represent the journey of the goddess and her distinct powers, each offering a unique lesson for spiritual growth:

- * Shailaputri: The daughter of the Himalayas, representing a strong foundation and unwavering determination.
- * Brahmacharini: The ascetic form, symbolizing penance, discipline, and spiritual knowledge.
- * Chandraghanta: The fierce warrior goddess, who inspires courage and fearlessness.
- * Kushmanda: The creator of the universe, representing life and cosmic energy.
- * Skandamata: The mother of Skanda (Kartikeya), embodying motherhood and boundless love.
- * Katyayani: The warrior goddess, revered for her power to destroy evil.
- * Kaalratri: The dark and powerful form that vanquishes ignorance and darkness.
- * Mahagauri: The goddess of purity, beauty, and peace.
- * Siddhidhatri: The giver of supernatural powers and ultimate liberation.

This multi-faceted worship reinforces the idea that the divine feminine energy, or Shakti, is not one-dimensional but encompasses various roles—from creator and protector to destroyer of evil and bestower of wisdom.

Garba and Dandiya: The Rhythmic Devotion of Gujarat

While Navratri is celebrated with great fervor across India, nowhere is it more famously a dance festival than in the state of Gujarat. The traditional folk

dances of Garba and Dandiya Raas are the heart and soul of the celebration, transforming cities and towns into pulsating open-air dance floors.

The word "Garba" comes from the Sanskrit word Garbha, meaning "womb." The dance is traditionally performed around a clay pot called a Garba Deep, which has a lit lamp inside. This pot symbolizes the human body, and the lamp within represents the divine energy of the Goddess. As dancers move in a circle, they honour the feminine form of divinity. The circular movement symbolizes the cyclical nature of life, time, and the universe, with the unmoving lamp in the center representing the Goddess—the constant, divine power in the midst of all change.

Dandiya Raas, with its rhythmic clash of decorated wooden sticks, is often seen as a mock fight between Goddess Durga and Mahishasura. The sticks represent Durga's sword, and the dance is a joyful celebration of her victory. The dancers move with coordinated steps and spins, creating a mesmerizing spectacle of energy and devotion.

In Gujarat, Navratri is not just a festival; it's a nine-night marathon of dance and devotion. People, dressed in vibrant, traditional attire—women in intricate Chaniya Cholis and men in Kediya and dhoti—gather in massive crowds, sometimes numbering in the thousands. The energy is infectious, the music is captivating, and the celebration lasts well into the early morning hours. It is a time when communities come together, bridging generations and social divides in a shared expression of faith and joy.

The Enduring Essence:

Beyond the glittering costumes and rhythmic dance, Navratri holds a deeper spiritual meaning. It is a time for introspection, self-discipline, and spiritual cleansing. Many devotees fast, meditate, and perform rituals to purify their bodies and minds. The festival teaches us that just as Goddess Durga defeated the demon Mahishasura, we too must find the inner strength to conquer our own inner demons—be it ego, anger, greed, or ignorance. Navratri is a powerful reminder that the divine feminine energy, Shakti, resides within each of us, empowering us to face challenges, cultivate compassion, and live a life of purpose. It is a celebration of life, a tribute to the power of goodness, and a timeless tradition that continues to bring communities together in a spirit of unity and devotion.

.Article by Team SquarePetals Global Webzine.



Moving Mountains

Life is a journey filled with challenges, and along the way, each of us encounters what I call “mountains.” These mountains are not always made of rock, soil, or stone. They come in the form of fears, failures, doubts, limitations, and seemingly insurmountable challenges. Sometimes

they are financial struggles. Sometimes they are broken dreams. Other times, they are the voices inside our own heads telling us that we are not good enough, not smart enough, or not strong enough.

And yet, the truth is this: mountains can be moved.

Human history is full of stories of men and women who dared to face the impossible, and by faith, determination, courage, and persistence, they moved their mountains. Their stories remind us that mountains are not there to stop us, but to prove to us what we are capable of becoming.

The Mountain Within and Without

There are two kinds of mountains in life: the ones outside of us and the ones inside of us.

External Mountains: These include financial debt, lack of resources, career setbacks, family issues, or health challenges. They stand in front of us like towering obstacles, blocking the road to our dreams.

Internal Mountains: These are often the heavier ones—fear, procrastination, low self-esteem, doubt, or negative self-talk. If you conquer the mountain within, you’ll find that the mountains outside become much easier to deal with.

The real battle begins in the mind. If you can win in your thoughts, you can win in your reality.

The Power of Belief

Belief is the engine that moves mountains. Without belief, effort feels like wasted energy. But with belief, every step becomes purposeful.

There is a timeless scripture that says: “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.” This is more than a religious saying—it is a life principle. Faith is the audacity to believe that the obstacle in front of you can and will give way.

Belief unlocks courage. Belief ignites resilience. Belief sustains action when everything else says, “Stop.”

Small Steps, Big Results

Too often, people think mountains are moved in one mighty push. But the truth is, mountains are moved one rock at a time.

You may not clear your debt in one day, but you can start with one disciplined financial choice.

You may not rebuild a broken relationship overnight, but you can start with one act of forgiveness.

You may not reach the top of your career ladder instantly, but you can start by excelling at the task before you.

Progress is not always loud or dramatic. Sometimes it’s silent, steady, and unseen. But every step matters.

Success is a series of small, consistent actions that eventually shift the balance in your favour.

Turning Obstacles into Opportunities

One of the greatest lessons about mountains is this: they are not just barriers; they are builders.

Without challenges, there would be no champions. Without resistance, there would be no strength. Without mountains, there would be no climbers.

The mountain you are facing today may feel like it’s crushing you, but in reality, it’s shaping you. It’s stretching your capacity, developing your resilience, and preparing you for victories that will inspire others.

Instead of asking, “Why me?” begin to ask, “What can I learn from this?” Every difficulty carries within it a seed of opportunity. The mountain that looks like a problem may be the very thing that launches you into your next level.

Stories of Mountain Movers

Think of people like Nelson Mandela, who faced the mountain of apartheid and 27 years in prison, yet emerged stronger to lead his nation into freedom.

Think of Helen Keller, who faced the mountain of being blind and deaf, yet learned to read, write, speak, and inspire millions across the world.

Think of Abraham Lincoln, who faced repeated failures in politics and business, but eventually moved the mountain of defeat to become one of the greatest presidents in history.

What do they all have in common? They refused to let the mountain stop them.

The Summit Awaits

Every mountain has a summit, a top, a peak where victory is celebrated. Climbing is never easy—it involves sweat, struggle, pain, and perseverance. But those who endure to the top will tell you that the view is worth it.

At the summit, you see life differently. What once looked impossible becomes proof of your strength. What once intimidated you now stands behind you as a conquered testimony.

The summit reminds you that the fight was not in vain.

Practical Ways to Move Your Mountain

1. Name Your Mountain. Clarity is power. You cannot move what you do not identify. Write it down. Is it fear? Is it debt? Is it lack of direction? Call it by name.

2. Build Unshakable Belief. Feed your mind with positivity, scriptures, affirmations, and stories of overcomes. What you believe determines how you act.

3. Start Small. Don't wait to take giant steps. Begin today with small, consistent actions that align with your vision.

4. Stay Persistent. The mountain will not move on the first push. Refuse to quit. Every effort weakens its grip.

5. Seek Help. Sometimes moving a mountain requires others. Find mentors, friends, or communities who will encourage and support you.

6. Celebrate Progress. Every milestone is proof that you are advancing. Celebrate each victory, no matter how small.

Keep Climbing

Life will always present you with mountains. They will never completely disappear. But here's the good news: the more mountains you move, the stronger you become.

You were not born to sit at the foot of challenges, intimidated and paralyzed. You were born to rise, to conquer, to overcome. The mountain in front of you today may look impossible, but remember this: others have moved theirs, and so can you.

With belief, persistence, courage, and resilience, you will look back one day and say, "That mountain didn't stop me—it made me."

So don't stop. Don't retreat. Don't give up. Keep climbing. Keep pushing. Keep moving.

Because you were not created for mediocrity. You were created to move mountains.

Author Michael Ediale

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Coax the Spirit, Don't Conquer It: A Gentleman's Guide to Drinking Well



On a weekend, many of us joyfully raise a glass, some in celebration, others out of habit, and some simply to mark the end of the week. The parties are lively, the playlists filled with familiar favorites, and the drinks... poured with enthusiasm and a touch of fun.

In the Army, we had a saying: **“Nurse your drink... You won’t need a doctor.”**

Back then, drinking was never just about the alcohol; it was about being present, demonstrating discipline, and refinement. You didn’t just drink a whisky... You engaged in a delightful conversation with it.

But somewhere between the corporate meeting rooms and the bar, something got lost.

At most corporate parties today, drinking has become a sport. Glasses clink too often, refills are on autopilot, and grace is replaced by excess. Sodas flood whiskies! Syrups smother spirits! And vodka is chugged like a dare! 🙄 What was meant to be savoured is often stripped of its soul.

I’m not writing this as a connoisseur; I write this as a professional who strongly believes in shaping people and culture. If social drinking is part of our work culture, then guiding how we approach it, with grace rather than recklessness, is part of my responsibility.

In a world of rushed refills and syrup-soaked cocktails, we've forgotten a simple truth: that.... A drink isn't meant to be conquered. It's meant to be courted. This isn't about being a snob. It's about intentional indulgence, understanding what you drink, how you drink, and why it deserves more than a quick gulp amid loud music and LinkedIn small talk.

Know Your Whiskies			
Type	What It Is	How to Enjoy	Pair With
Single Malt	Whisky made at one distillery using malted barley. Often complex and layered.	Neat or with a few drops of water to open up aromas.	Blue cheese, dark chocolate, grilled lamb chops.
Scotch	Whisky from Scotland, can be single malt or blended. Known for smokiness and peat.	Sip slowly. Try Islay for smoke, Speyside for fruitiness.	Smoked salmon, charcuterie, nuts.
Double/Blended Malts	Two or more single malts blended, no grain alcohol. Smoother, often more accessible.	Great beginner's dram. Try with a large ice cube if needed.	Roast chicken, cheddar, olives.
Bourbon	American whiskey made mostly from corn. Sweet, bold, caramel-rich.	Best with one ice cube or in an old fashioned.	BBQ meats, pecan pie, bacon.
Irish Whiskey	Triple-distilled, lighter and smoother. Less peat, more elegance.	Neat or in a highball.	Shepherd's pie, soda bread, apple tart.

So, let's raise the bar... literally, and first, get to know your whiskies..

Food: Dump that Chakhna. Know what food goes with what drink.

The Right Food for the Right Drink		
Drink	Drink Pair With	Why It Works
Vodka (Neat or chilled)	Caviar, smoked fish, cold cuts	Vodka cleanses the palate; perfect with salty, rich starters.
Cognac	Dark chocolate, foie gras, aged cheese	The warmth and depth of cognac pairs beautifully with creamy or bitter notes.
Dark Rum	Banana fritters, grilled pineapple, spicy ribs	The caramel and molasses notes love a sweet-and-spicy profile.
Gin (classic dry)	Grilled prawns, citrus salad, goat cheese	Gin's botanicals match well with citrus, herbs, and light seafood.
Beer (Craft or Lager)	Burgers, pretzels, spicy wings	Beer plays well with casual, hearty, and spicy fare. Balance hops with salt.

PICK THE RIGHT GLASSWARE		
Drink	Recommended Glass	Why It Matters
Single Malt Whisky	Glencairn or Copita	Tulip shape concentrates aromas, perfect for nosing and sipping.
Blended Scotch	Old-Fashioned (Tumbler)	Wide brim allows ice or water; suitable for casual sipping.
Double Malt / Cask Strength	Nosing Glass or Glencairn	Helps control strong aromas and supports slow exploration.
Vodka	Small Stemmed Shot or Flute	Maintains chill, minimizes hand heat, preserves clarity.
Cognac	Snifter (Balloon Glass)	Large bowl allows aromas to open; warming enhances the profile.
Dark Rum	Rocks Glass or Nosing Glass	Ideal for sipping; accommodates optional ice without dilution.
White Rum	Highball or Collins	Designed for long drinks with mixers; maintains carbonation.
Beer – Lager	Pilsner Glass	Tall, tapered to show clarity and preserve bubbles.
Beer – Ale / IPA	Tulip Glass	Traps aroma, supports head retention, enhances hops.
Beer – Stout / Porter	Nonic Pint or Mug	Allows dense foam, ideal for creamy mouthfeel.
Cocktails – Negroni / Old Fashioned	Rocks Glass (Lowball)	Sturdy, allows stirring and slow dilution over a large cube.
Cocktails – Martini / Manhattan	Martini Glass (Stemmed)	Keeps the drink cold, enhances visual appeal.

If You're Going to Drink, Drink to Savour. Not to Forget. Not to Prove. Not to Impress.

Smell First

Lift the glass gently to your nose instead of leaning it down toward your face. Take a soft inhale with your mouth slightly open. What delightful aromas do you notice, maybe some smoke, fruit, spice, or earthy notes?

Swirl Gently

When it comes to whisky, wine, or cognac, oxygen plays a wonderful role in enhancing the subtle layers of flavour. Take a moment to admire the legs, those charming trails that slide down the side of the glass. The more gracefully they fall, the richer and more enjoyable the spirit becomes!

Sip, Don't Swig

Let it rest gently on your tongue and savour the experience. Feel free to move it around your mouth, and if you'd like, close your eyes to immerse yourself in the moment fully. Take your time to enjoy the finish. Pay attention to the delightful warmth or unique notes that emerge right at the end.

Listen to the Aftertaste

An excellent drink lingers on the palate, and that's where the real magic happens! Imagine the smoky notes, a hint of subtle sweetness, and perhaps even a touch of pepper. It's like the final line of an enchanting poem—soft yet utterly unforgettable!

Principles of Drinking Well

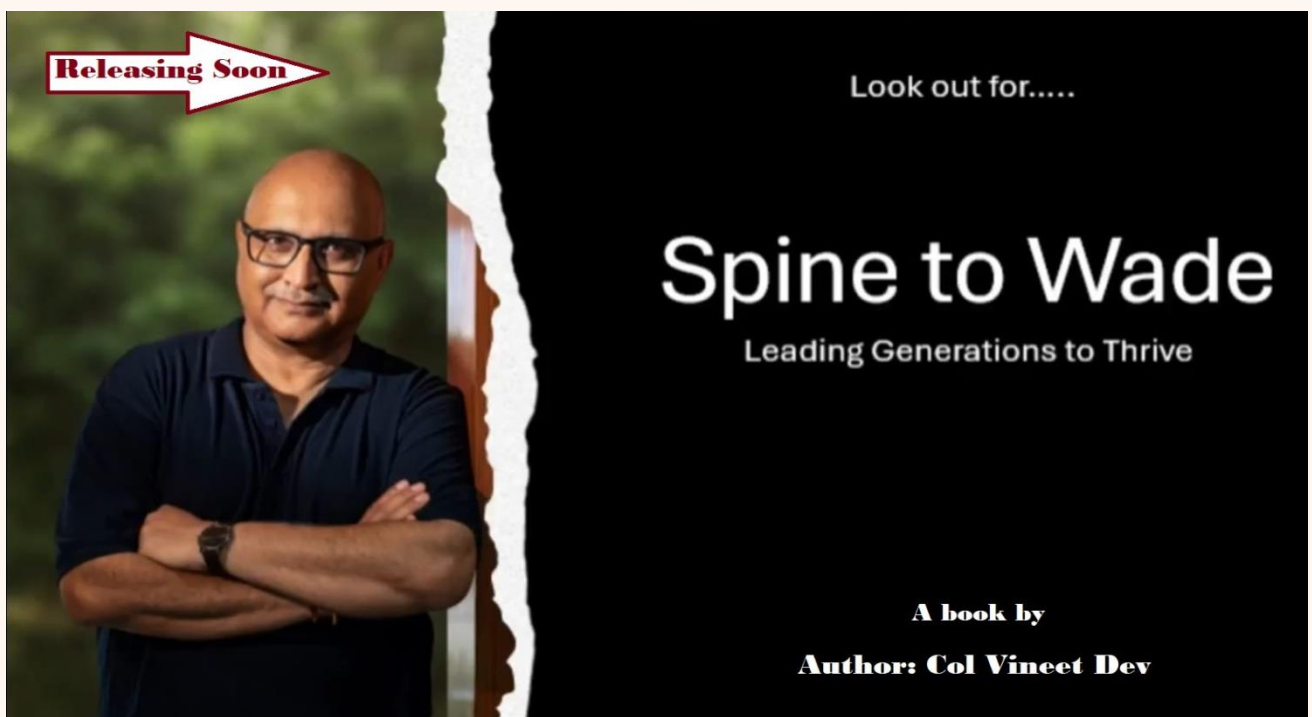
- **Sip slow.** Think slower. A drink is a punctuation mark, not the sentence.
- **Never mix quality with cola or soda.** Good spirits don't need camouflage.
- **Drinking is not a social status.** It's sensory intelligence.
- **Three drinks over three hours.** And that too, only if you're listening to the drink, not the DJ.
- **Glassware matters.** A tumbler for whisky, a snifter for cognac, a flute for champagne. It's not pretentious; it's respectful.

Toast to Thoughtful Drinking

The next time you pick up a glass, pause. Look at the spirit. Smell it. Swirl it. Take it seriously, but not solemnly. Because drinking, like leadership or poetry, is about attention.

You don't need to finish the bottle to enjoy a good drink. You just need to connect with it and let it tell its story. And as the old saying goes: "Coax the spirit... don't kill it."

By Col Vineet Dev – Sena Medal (Retd.)



REMINISCING MY JOURNEY AS A MILITARY VETERAN: NOSTALGIA

"When the hookah smokes, the memories speak."

The story of a soldier never truly ends with retirement. The uniform may be folded and placed away, the medals may gather dust in a corner of the house, but the battles continue. Some are fought within the mind, some in courtrooms, some in the silence of nights when memories come rushing back like ghosts. I write not just as a veteran of the Indian Armed Forces, but as a man who has walked through fire, ice, loss, and loneliness, and still chooses to stand tall.

When I first donned the olive green, I knew it was not just a profession, it was a promise. A promise to serve without counting the cost. That cost came heavy and came early. Counter terrorist operations in Kashmir valley. Days blurred into nights with the crack of gunfire. The snow carried not the purity of peace but the crimson of sacrifice. I lost brothers there not colleagues, not subordinates, but brothers. I carried them back, wrapped in the Tricolour, my arms trembling under their weight but my heart heavier still.

Siachen..... The very word sends a shiver through my bones even today. At minus 52, survival is victory, every breath a battle. The mountains are impartial and they kill with avalanches, frostbite, HAPO or the sheer cruelty of isolation. I still remember one night, when the blizzard roared so fiercely that even our prayers froze on our lips. I counted my men like a father counts his children, terrified that one would vanish into the white void. Those days carved deep lines into my soul, lines no medal could smooth out.

But perhaps the hardest battle I ever fought was not with a rifle in my hand, but with files, affidavits, and endless hearings in the echoing corridors of a courtroom. My body bore the wounds of service; injuries, illnesses, the invisible toll of years in extreme conditions. Yet, when I sought my disability pension, I was not met with compassion but with bureaucracy. Words like "not attributable to military service" and "Life style ailment" became weapons that cut deeper than any enemy bullet. I stood before judges, my service record in one hand and my dignity in the other. I relived my battles, not to earn sympathy but to claim what was rightfully mine. Each appearance drained me, each delay mocked me, but I persevered. For a soldier does not quit, not even when the battlefield is replaced by paper and ink.

When the judgment finally came in my favour, it was not triumph I felt but

exhaustion. That pension was not charity; it was justice long denied. And yet, even in that struggle, I thought of the countless veterans who lacked the strength or means to fight this battle. I fought for them as much as for myself.

In the years since, I found purpose not in rest but in service of a different kind. Young boys and girls came to me, their eyes burning with the same dream I once carried to serve in uniform, to march with pride. I made them my mission. I trained them, guided them, and mentored them in a small “SSB Guidance Academy” within the perimeter of my house. Not for money, never for money but for the sheer joy of seeing their dreams take flight. I drilled them in discipline, taught them the honour of the uniform, and showed them the meaning of sacrifice. I gave them wings to fly. Many of them now stand where I once stood, saluting the Tricolour. Each time I hear of one of their successes, it feels like a silent medal pinned upon my chest.

But duty does not end with mentoring; it extends into grief. I have travelled far and wide, across states and towns, just to stand beside the families of veterans who lost their battle in silence. I went not as a guest, not as a formality, but as a brother, a fellow soldier who understood the pain of loss. I sat with widows, held their trembling hands, and shared their tears. I carried words when words felt inadequate; I carried silence when silence was enough. I hugged the orphaned children of my fellow veterans and told them their father has not gone, his story would live in me, in us, in the brotherhood that never dies.

One of my most solemn duties has been arranging the funerals of brave hearts whose mortal remains reached my hometown of Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh. When the coffins arrived, draped in the Tricolour, it was not just a body inside, it was a life lived in service; a dream cut short, a sacrifice complete. I made it my mission to ensure every such hero received a farewell befitting his courage. I coordinated with district authorities, rallied the community, and stood vigil as thousands came to pay respects. I remember one such night vividly the bugle’s mournful call, the Tricolour fluttering in the evening breeze, the tears of a mother who kissed the coffin as if her son could still feel her warmth. I saluted then, my hand steady but my heart breaking. Arranging those funerals was not a duty; it was a sacred act of remembrance.

Life as a veteran has also meant carrying the torch of brotherhood into civilian life. I have made it my habit, my discipline, to attend every veteran function, every gathering, and every meeting in my district. Punctual, present, and committed for this is how I honour the bond that once bound us on battlefields. These functions are not mere formalities. They are lifelines. They

are moments where we relive memories, share struggles, and remind each other that though the world may forget, we will not. Each handshake, each tear shed, each laugh shared in those gatherings is proof that the soldier's spirit never dies.

Yet, even with all this, there are nights when the silence is heavy. Nights when I lie awake, the ceiling above me turning into a sky lit with tracer rounds. Nights when I hear the screams of comrades, the howl of blizzards, the echo of last words whispered into radios. Nights when my body, weary with age and pain, reminds me of the toll it has paid. I smile in public, I stand tall at functions, but in solitude, I fight battles no one sees. This is the invisible war of every veteran unseen, unsung, but relentless.

Why I Still March On?

And yet, despite it all the frostbite, the bullets, the court battles, the loneliness, the bureaucracy I do not regret a single day. I lived a life larger than myself. I stood guard while others slept. I carried the Tricolour through snow, storm, and fire. I wept, yes, but I also laughed in the face of danger. I lost, yes, but I also gained a brotherhood stronger than blood. Today, as I guide youth, comfort grieving families, arrange funerals, and unite veterans, I realize my service never ended. It merely changed its form. I may no longer hold a rifle, but I hold something equally powerful the spirit of a soldier who refuses to quit.

The world may see me as a veteran, but in my heart, I remain a soldier. The uniform is not on my body, but it is etched in my soul. The difficulties I have endured are not burdens; they are sacred reminders of the price of freedom. Yes, I have scars on my body, on my heart, on my mind. But each scar is a story, each wound a verse in the poem of service. And when my final bugle call comes, I will go as I lived standing tall, saluting the Tricolour, proud of the difficult, painful, yet profoundly meaningful journey of being a ***"proud veteran of the Indian Armed Forces"***.

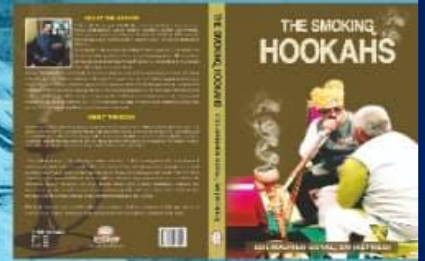


***For once a soldier, always a soldier.
"A Veteran's truth smokes through these pages."***

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Gallantry Awardee, Author & Poet

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THE SMOKING HOOKAHS

COL MADHUR GOYAL, SM

*"The Smoking Hookahs is more than a book -
it's the unfiltered voice of a veteran who
lived through the fire, the frost, and the silence
after the guns."*

THE RUSSIA-INDIA-CHINA TROIKA



THE U.S. NUDGE

There is a saying in world affairs, “Never waste a good crisis.” The recent train wreck of US-India relations has been one of the greatest crises Indian diplomacy has faced in decades. It is to our credit that we have used it both as a vindication of our own stand, and as a means to explore other options that lie ahead.

The harangue of Trump and his aides against India, and the arbitrary imposition of 50% tariffs on Indian goods, seems to be based more on personal pique for not being credited for the ceasefire between India and Pakistan—something that he hoped would bolster his claims for a much-coveted Nobel Peace Prize—than any economic or strategic considerations. The signals emanating from his administration have toned down and more and more voices are reiterating that

the India-US ties remain “the defining partnership of the 21st century.”

Perhaps this crisis will tide over and even the tariffs could eventually be rolled back. (Maybe by the US judiciary itself which has declared them as exceeding the President’s authority)? But what would take more time to repair is the loss of trust that has now come about in India-US relations.

US actions have pushed India towards its traditional friend, Russia; and a traditional adversary, China, in an unlikely, but not entirely inconceivable troika between the three nations. The optics of Prime Minister Modi with President Putin and Xi Jinping in the SCO summit at Tianjin was there for world display. The triple handshake and the personal warmth were unmistakable. Much has also been made of Modi’s drive with Putin in his limousine, and his 45-minute tete-a-tete on the sidelines. Much of it was for optics, but the underlying message was clear. India has demonstrated that it has choices besides the US and the West, and the choices that it makes can completely rebalance the world order.

THE RIC COMPACT

The bonhomie and the signals emanating from the three—coupled with the wrecking ball of Trumpian policies—has re-raised the idea of the Russia-India-China compact (RIC)—an economic and strategic partnership first proposed by Russian Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov during a visit to India in 1998. The concept took slow shape in the early 2000s and the first RIC meeting between the foreign ministers of the three nations took place in 2007 at the Delhi Security Summit. Over 20 ministerial level meetings have taken place since then, but the concept never really developed into an alliance. The idea was eventually grounded after the 2020 Galwan clash between India and China and has resurfaced only now after the recent thawing of ties.

The proposal of a compact between Russia-India and China is mouth-watering—and a game-changer. RIC accounts for over a third of the world’s population and encompasses over a fifth of the global landmass. They hold the world’s second largest, fourth largest (soon to be third) and 11th largest economies and account for 23% of the world’s GDP. Scientifically, technologically and industrially, they are amongst the leaders in the world and possess vast resources of oil, gas, food and minerals. They are amongst the top four military powers of the world—after only the US. Economically, they

outstrip the G7 nations. Strategically and economically this compact can more than counter-balance the US-led western order, facilitate de-dollarization and an alternate currency, and create a pole of power that upends the US and its western allies.

It is tempting, but there are dangers and pitfalls along the way. For starters, is the state of India-China relations which though on the mend, have been plagued by distrust since 1962. The two share the world's largest disputed border which will require a much wiser generation to resolve. And then there is the irritant of Pakistan and the subtle conflict for regional supremacy and resources that can spill over at any time. Even worse is the likelihood that in the murky world of realpolitik the US could just cut a deal with China or Russia or both and isolates India.

Russia would, of course, want to form this troika and is its most ardent proponent. With India there, it balances its own equations with China (with which it is a relatively junior partner on its own). It also provides the economic and strategic alternative that enables it to firmly break the isolation that the West has imposed upon it.

For India, it is an interesting prospect that can be developed in the long term—largely dependent on the trajectory of India-China ties. The stance India takes will shape the global balance of power. It will also hasten the East-versus-West divide and place India firmly on one side—a position we have steadfastly avoided so far to preserve our strategic autonomy.

So, while India should pursue the RIC troika, it must also get back to normalizing India-US ties which have been assiduously cultivated over the past 25 years. Many US analysts—including former NSA Jake Sullivan—have been scathing in Trump's rebuffing of India, calling it as the "USA's greatest strategic blunder." Both the US and the Indian administrations are working overtime to get things back on an even keel, and that could well come about.

India is more aligned to Western values and concepts. Economically too, we have more to gain from the West in terms of markets, technology and investments, than from China and Russia. Last year, India-US trade stood at \$129 billion—with India exporting \$87.5 billion and importing \$42.5 billion worth of goods. And while India-China trade rose to a record \$136 billion, it

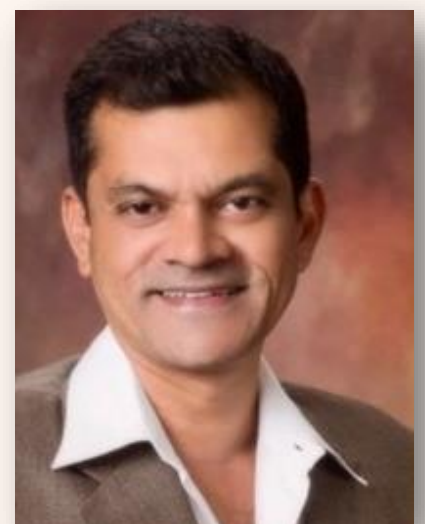
was made up largely of a staggering \$120 billion of Chinese exports and just around \$17 billion of Indian goods. Chinese investments in Indian markets would also be fraught with long-term risk—especially in critical sectors such as telecom. So, in spite of the Trumpian rants, it will be best to repair the damage to India-US ties, while still preserving our strategic choices, of which RIC is a very viable one.

There are other choices as well. PM Modi's recent visit to Japan further galvanized India-Japan relations, in what can be the most consequential Asian partnership. There has also been heightened strategic and economic cooperation with Europe and the European Union especially after the trade deal with UK, and a likely one with the EU. Trump's policies have caused awareness amongst its partners, and India is emerging as the alternative and a hedge against frequent US turnarounds. Trump's actions have also weakened Quad, NATO and other US-led alliances. In fact, Trump may not even visit India for the Quad summit to be held later this year. But India can still go ahead with a trilateral meet along with Japan and Australia so that the alliance does not lose momentum completely.

As western-led alliances weaken, other alliances such as SCO and BRICS get strengthened. BRICS—which has just added six new members to the original five—could well emerge as an alternate economic order, with Russia, India and China at the centre.

As India navigates an uncertain global climate, two things stand out. Firstly, our concept of strategic autonomy has held us in good stead and should be maintained. Secondly, there are choices available—both with individual nations like Japan, Germany, Russia and others and multilateral ones like Quad. RIC is one of the choices that India can explore. It is still in a nascent stage and could take many years to fructify—but it is an idea which is awakening and one whose time seems to have come

Col. Ajay Singh is an international award-winning writer, who has authored seven books and over 200 articles. He writes regularly for SquarePetals Global Webzine.



#Autocorrect

Micropoetry

I happen to text...
to find the silly and vexed,
still funny, it's effect :
the Autocorrect 😬
Perfectly imperfect
Abrupt comical defects
Errors at the best ...
mode 'Autocorrect' 😂



Dr. Sansriti Johri

WHEN SHE SLEEPS

The house is still, the night serene,
He stands by the doorway, unseen.
His daughter lies, in slumber deep,
On the eve of the day her dreams will leap.
Tomorrow she'll walk through a college gate,
A new world waiting, a different fate.
But tonight she rests, his little one,
Though eighteen years have come and gone.
He remembers a room with sterile light,
Her first loud cry, his heart's delight.
The tiny fist that gripped his thumb,
The lullabies hummed till sleep would come.
Her first day at school, the tears he hid,
The joy in her eyes at all she did.
The stories at night, the questions unending,
The moments of silence, the laughter unbending.
He sees the years as a fleeting stream,
A kaleidoscope made of a parent's dream.
How quickly she grew, how tall she stands,
Carving her future with steady hands.
And deep in his heart, a truth rings clear—
In a few short years, she won't be here.
A wedding, a home, a life apart,
Yet she'll always live inside his heart.
So he watches her breathe, the quiet room,
Half in pride, half in gloom.
For love is letting go, he knows,
As children blossom, as life bestows.
Tonight she sleeps, unaware he weeps,
For the girl he raised, the love he keeps.
A father's prayer drifts soft above,
Guarding her journey with endless love.



Mr. Badrish Srivastava, Sr. Teacher & Mentor | Administrator
Mt. Litera Zee School

A poem on the scene where a father is watching her daughter sleeping peacefully who is going to join a university the next day and is all set to take a leap towards her future. he is also thinking of her last 18yrs from the hospital when she was born till date when she is grown up now and also that in couple of years she will get married and move on in life



Journey of timeless staple Chapati

Chapati is an essential and a must-have component of an Indian dining plate. No Indian meal, whether breakfast, lunch, or dinner, is complete without chapati. It is an unleavened flatbread made with a variety of cereal and pseudocereal flours, including wheat, ragi, sorghum, maize, amaranth, and rice. It is also known as bread, roti and fulka, depending on the cooking techniques. Chapati is a versatile food item that goes well with curry, pulses, paneer, non-veg and even simply with pickles. It contains carbohydrates, proteins, fiber and other minerals and vitamins. The whole-grain chapatis are a rich source of fiber. Studies have shown that high fiber content promotes good digestion and gut health. High fiber helps lower bad cholesterol levels, hence contributing to better heart health. Chapatis are a good Source of B vitamins and minerals like iron and magnesium, crucial for various bodily functions. Chapati is a low glycemic index food and is recommended for diabetic patients. . It causes a slower rise in blood sugar levels.

The origin of chapati is as interesting as chapati itself is. There are several tales and theories about the origin of chapati, though the exact origin is unknown. According to the Britannica, the word chapati is taken from the Sanskrit word *carpatī*, meaning “thin cake,”. This describes the traditional method of making chapatis by slapping them between the palms. The word Roti is similar to the Sanskrit word *Rotika*, mentioned in *Bhavaprakasa*, a medical literature authored by Acharya Bhavmishra. He particularly described *Rotika* as a kind of wheat flatbread that is cooked on a heavy, flat skillet and directly heated over a fire.

Archaeological evidence suggests that flatbreads similar to chapatis were being consumed in the Indus Valley Civilization as early as 3000 BC and later spread to Southeast and Central Asia, East Africa, and the Caribbean, where they remain part of the everyday diet.

Another theory suggests that chapati originated in Persia. Initially, it was thick and made from all-purpose flour or maida. Eventually, the Persian version transformed to a coarse texture, making it more practical and easier to prepare and was called chapati, which we know today

According to many historical narratives, chapati was first introduced to the Indian subcontinent by traders or travelers from East Africa. The round and flat shape, long shelf life and ability to hold curry or sabji made it a perfect food for travelers. In fact, it's a famous saying for East Africans that if you visit an East African and you are not offered chapati to eat, it means your host is not an East African. Some sources claim it originated during the Mughal period, as it is documented in the 16th-century text *Ain-i-Akbari*, written by Abul Fazal. However, other accounts say, chapati already existed; the Mughals refined it and added it to the imperial diet, along with other delicacies, as part of their evolving culinary customs.



HALWA NAGORI PLATTER

Recipe featuring Suji Halwa, Bhandara Aloo Sabzi, and Suji Poori (Nagori-style) — a classic breakfast from the streets of Old Delhi:

1. Suji Halwa (Sheera)

Ingredients:

- 1 cup suji (semolina)
- 3/4 cup ghee
- 3/4 to 1 cup sugar (to taste)
- 2.5 cups water
- 1/4 tsp cardamom powder
- Chopped dry fruits (cashews, almonds, raisins)

Method:

1. Heat ghee in a deep pan. Add semolina and roast on low flame until golden and aromatic.
2. Meanwhile, boil water and sugar together until sugar dissolves.
3. Slowly pour the hot sugar syrup into the roasted suji, stirring constantly.
4. Cook until thick and ghee starts to separate. Add cardamom and dry fruits.
5. Serve warm.

2. Bhandara-style Aloo Sabzi (Potato Curry)

Ingredients:

- 4 medium boiled potatoes (roughly mashed)
- 2 tbsp oil or ghee
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1/4 tsp hing (asafoetida)
- 2-3 green chillies (slit)
- 1 tsp grated ginger
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- Salt to taste
- 2 cups water
- Chopped coriander leaves

Method:

1. Heat oil/ghee; add cumin, hing, chillies, and ginger.
2. Add mashed potatoes, turmeric, and coriander powder.
3. Add water and salt, mix well, and simmer for 10–15 minutes.
4. Garnish with fresh coriander.



3. Suji Poori (Nagori Poori)

Ingredients:

- 1 cup suji (semolina)
- 1/4 cup White Flour (optional, for softness)
- 2 tbsp ghee
- Warm water (as needed)
- Pinch of salt
- Oil for deep frying

Method:

1. Mix suji, maida (if using), ghee, and salt. Add warm water gradually and knead into a stiff dough.
2. Cover and let it rest for 20–30 minutes.
3. Divide into small balls, roll into small pooris.
4. Deep fry in hot oil until puffed and golden in color.



Falguni Thakkar

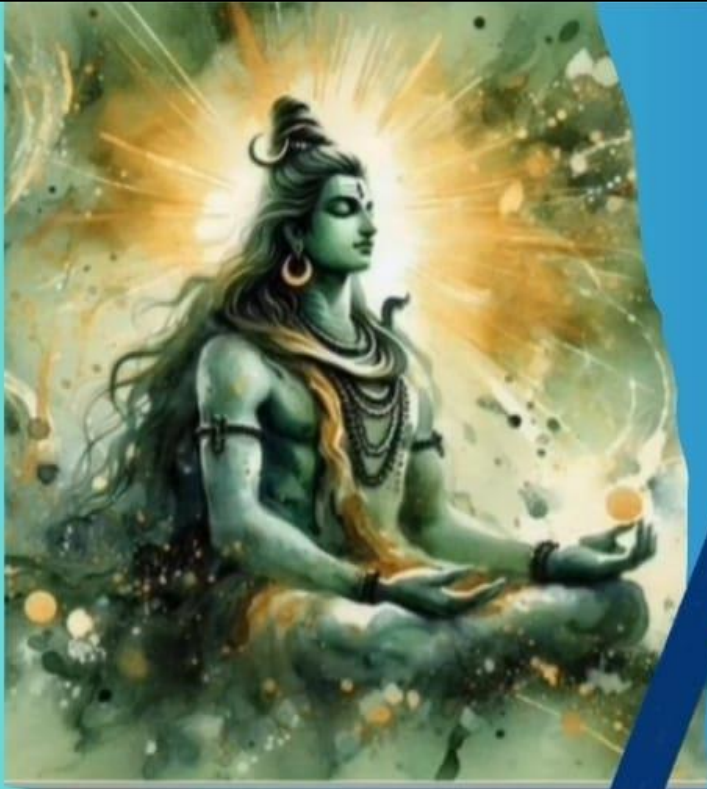
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Published by :
EsquireVJ Publication House
Website: www.esquirevj.biz
E-mail: esquirevj@gmail.com
Ph.: +91 77788 96891
 +91 77788 96137



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